

Buddhism in Australia

Traditions in change

Edited by
**Cristina Rocha and
Michelle Barker**



Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism

Buddhism in Australia

The number of Buddhists in Australia has grown dramatically in recent years. In 2006 Buddhists accounted for 2.1 per cent of Australia's population, almost doubling the 1996 figures and making it the fastest growing religion in the country. This book analyses the arrival and localisation of Buddhism in Australia in the context of the globalization of Buddhism.

Australia's close geographical proximity to Asia has encouraged an intense flow of people, ideas, practices and commodities from its neighbouring countries, while at the same time allowing the development of the religion to be somewhat different to its growth in other Western countries. The book seeks to explore the Buddhist experience in Australia, looking at the similarities and particularities of this experience in relation to other Western countries.

The inception of Buddhism in Australia is investigated and a voice is provided to people on the ground who have been fundamental in making this process possible. For the first time, academic analysis and practitioners' experience are juxtaposed to show the adaptations and challenges of Buddhism in Australia from above and below. This book is a unique and valuable contribution to the study of Buddhism in the West, globalization of religion and studies in Asian religion.

Cristina Rocha teaches at the School of Humanities and Languages, and is a researcher at the Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney. She is the editor of the *Journal of Global Buddhism*. Her research interests are Buddhism in the West, globalization, religion and migration studies. Her previous publications include *Zen in Brazil: The Quest for Cosmopolitan Modernity* (2006).

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Contents

<i>Tables</i>	xi
<i>Contributors</i>	xii
<i>Preface: Martin Baumann</i>	xv
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xvii
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xviii

Introduction	1
MICHELLE BARKER AND CRISTINA ROCHA	

PART I

Academics	21
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1 Localizing Buddhism in Australia	21
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1 The emergence of secular insight practice in Australia	23
DAVID BUBNA-LITIC AND WINTON HIGGINS	

2 Soto Zen in Australia: tradition, challenges and innovations	36
LEESA S. DAVIS	

3 Green Tara in Australia: reassessing the relationship between gender, religion and power relations	49
RUTH FITZPATRICK	

2 Buddhist impacts on land and culture	61
---	----

1 Buddhifying Australia: multicultural capital and Buddhist material culture in rural Victoria	63
SALLY MCARA	

2 Locating a Buddhist temple in Wollongong, New South Wales	74
GORDON WAITT	

x	<i>Contents</i>	
3	Sydney, a city growing within: the establishment of Buddhist centres in Western Sydney JOHN SKENNAR	86
4	Adaptation and continuity in Cambodian Buddhist temples: implications for service delivery and community development SHIVA VASI	95
	PART II	
	The Buddhist community	105
1	Adaptations and challenges	105
1	Transformations of insight PATRICK KEARNEY	107
2	Sōka Gakkai: dialogue as the transformative expression of Buddhist humanism ELIZABETH BOWEN	113
3	Ordaining women in Australia NAGASURI	119
4	The journey of a lay female Zen teacher: 'On a withered tree a flower blooms' SUBHANA BARZAGHI	124
5	Changes and challenges to Vietnamese Buddhism in Australia TUONG QUANG LUU	134
2	Buddhism in action down under	141
1	Educating for wisdom and compassion mind PATRICIA SHERWOOD	143
2	Venerable Robina Courtin: an unconventional Buddhist? ANNA HALAFOFF	148
3	Being all of who I am: Buddhist monk and chaplain VENERABLE THICH THONG PHAP	153
4	The Buddhist Council of Victoria and the challenges of recognizing Buddhism as a religion in Australia DIANA COUSENS	157
5	Challenges of teaching Buddhism in contemporary society LAMA CHOEDAK RINPOCHE	162
	<i>Index</i>	167

Tables

I.1 Demographics of Australian Buddhists, 1991–2006	7
I.2 Birthplace of Australian Buddhists, 2006	8

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Preface

Many Buddhisms in Australia: continuity and accommodation

Martin Baumann

For the last two decades, the analysis of Buddhism in the West has brought forward numerous studies that scrutinize the development, transformation and current status of Buddhism in North America and Europe. More recently, similar efforts have been made to document Buddhism in South America, Africa and Australia. In 1989 Paul Croucher published a detailed, chronologically arranged history (*Buddhism in Australia 1848–1988*) focusing on Buddhist pioneers, teachers and organizations. Now, two decades later, *Buddhism in Australia: Traditions in Change*, by Cristina Rocha and Michelle Barker, not only continues to narrate this story, but it also opens the field to a multiplicity of disciplinary and methodological approaches. Furthermore, this volume brings together scholars studying the arrival and localization of Buddhism in Australia and prominent Buddhist teachers and community members involved in forming, adapting and indigenizing Buddhist practices and concepts.

Whenever Buddhist ideas and practices, roles and organizational forms have settled in a new culture and society, they have maintained and preserved the tradition in addition to adapting and changing it. The notion of ‘tradition’ – of handing on ideas and rituals – expresses processes of continuation and transformation. In the course of the last 2500 years, the teachings of the North Indian ascetic, Buddha Shakyamuni, have developed into adapted localized forms appropriate to each new culture and society that the teachings have entered. It may well be argued that it is more appropriate to speak of a plurality of ‘Buddhisms’, each marked by the specific adaptations made to the culture, norms, rules and religions of each new host society. In this way, traditions and (sub)schools of Burmese, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Tibetan, Cambodian and many more culturally coined ‘Buddhisms’ have come into being as a result of century-long processes.

Although Buddhist teachings, persons and rituals first came to Australia in the nineteenth century, it is only in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that Buddhism has gained a lasting footing in Australian multicultural society. This timely volume narrates the story in detail: examining how Buddhist concepts, practices, images and organizational structures have become a part of the religious plurality existent in Australia. Like many other western nation-states, Australia has become a place in which the varieties of different Buddhist traditions and schools meet.

This volume highlights the fact that Buddhism in Australia is very much a part of a globalized Buddhism. Processes of globalization are occurring alongside processes of particularization that endeavour to indigenize Buddhism to Australian culture and society. Over time, these developments will lead to the development of a multifaceted Australian Buddhism. The Buddhist journey of preserving and changing the tradition thus continues, accommodating Buddhist practices, ideas, roles and structures to the needs of the new cultural environment.

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- Thich Thong Phap (2009) 'A Life of High Adventure: Integrating the monk and the pastor', *Journal of the Tertiary Campus Ministry Association*, 3 (1): 101–07.
- Waitt, G. (2003) 'A place for Buddha in Wollongong, New South Wales? Territorial rules in the place-making of sacred spaces', *Australian Geographer*, 34 (2): 223–38.

Abbreviations

AABCP	Australian Association of Buddhist Counsellors and Psychotherapists
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CPE	clinical pastoral education
FPMT	Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition
FWBO	Friends of the Western Buddhist Order
ITCA	Insight Teachers' Circle of Australia
LGA	local government area
LPP	Liberation Prison Project
NSW	New South Wales
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
SGI	Sōka Gakkai International
TBRL	team-based right livelihood
WBD	Wat Buddha Dhamma
WBO	Western Buddhist Order (now known as Triratna Buddhist Order)